

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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GIANT STEP FORWARD FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAMS

A major breakthrough in the administration of endangered species programs came recently with the signing of cooperative agreements with 11 States, Director Lynn A. Greenwalt of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today.

These actions will pump about \$2 million into State programs from fiscal year 1976 funds. No firm figures are currently available for fiscal year 1977, but it is anticipated that the \$2 million figure will be met again.

"This event signals a new era in endangered species work because it puts the emphasis, the action, and the money at the local level where the problems exist," Keith M. Schreiner, head of the Federal endangered species programs, said. "The entire job can't be done from Washington or from a Federal regional office. Most of the recovery action must take place in each individual State where the species occur."

Congress recognized this when it passed the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and directed that cooperative agreements be sought with the States.

The signing of the first 11 agreements culminates a 2-year effort on the part of individual States to align their State laws and regulations with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Further, the States involved had to design and establish field programs for endangered animals.

The States involved are:

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| Arkansas | Florida | New York |
| California | Michigan | South Carolina |
| Colorado | New Jersey | Washington |
| Delaware | New Mexico | |

Now that the agreements are in force, many States will carry out expanded conservation programs. The Interior Department can provide financial assistance under the rules and regulations for Federal Aid. As part of the agreements, Federal and State law enforcement officers will cooperate in the detection, apprehension, and prosecution of violators of the Federal Endangered Species Act or the State laws which apply.

Negotiations are underway with several other States for the signing of additional cooperative agreements. Over the coming months it is expected that most States will enter similar agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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